



November 10, 2003

**San Juan River Basin Recovery
Implementation Program
Hydrology Committee
Conference Call Summary
October 14, 2003**

Members/Alternates Present: Representing:

Pat Page, Chairman U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Ray Alvarado State of Colorado
Ron Bliesner U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
Rick Cox Water Development Interests
Steve Cullinan U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Steve Harris Water Development Interests
Mike Hamman Jicarilla Apache Nation
John Leeper Navajo Nation
Bill Miller Southern Ute Indian Tribe
John Whipple State of New Mexico
Brian Westfall U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs

Others present: Representing:

Dave King U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Shirley Mondy, Program Coordinator U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Introductions and Review and Approval of Agenda Items

Pat Page welcomed the attendees, who then introduced themselves. The agenda was approved.

Review of August 5, 2003, Draft Conference Call Summary

This meeting summary was approved as modified.

Review of Action Item Log

The action item log was reviewed and updated.

Action item 81 - Pat Page will send out the summary that he got from Amy Cutler to the Hydrology Committee. He will invite Amy to the next meeting.

Review FY04 Budget

The Model Development scope of work was approved at approximately \$71,000 with an additional contingency fund of \$20,000 to be used only if it is approved by the Hydrology Committee in advance. About \$46,000 is for Reclamation work and the rest is for the contractor (Keller Bliesner Engineering). The Model Maintenance and Operation scope of work was approved at approximately \$54,000 **All administrative costs associated with model development should be noted separately from the administrative costs associated with model maintenance, even though it is shown in one scope of work.**

Reclamation has modified the contract with Tetra Tech for services with Keller-Bliesner to extend the timeframe and then will modify it further to add more money for this fiscal year.

Status Report

Dave King sent a report to Pat Page late Friday. **Pat will send the status report out to the committee today or tomorrow after he has had a chance to review it.**

Dave had commitments at the end of last fiscal year so there is not much to report. The McElmo data has been adjusted and the forecast error regression has been updated and is now more relevant to a daily model.

Pat Page pointed out that our target date to develop draft model documentation and have it to the Hydrology Committee for comments is May 31. The Coordination Committee wants to see a product and see results this year.

Alternative Methods for Providing Water to Fish

The cloud seeding proposal did not get approved by the Hydrology Committee at this time partly due to many people not having enough information to make a decision. It would be a good idea to bring the cloud seeding consultant to the next meeting to let him present his information. **Pat Page will invite Western Weather Consultants to the May Hydrology Committee.**

Tom Pitts asked for a report on the decision on the cloud seeding proposal and why it didn't go forward. **Pat Page and Shirley Mondy will develop the report and will send it to the Coordination Committee.**

Does the Hydrology Committee need to establish a subcommittee to look at alternative ways of getting water for the fish? Is finding water for the long term or for the drought?

It was opined by some that the Committee should be looking at all options, including leasing and purchasing water. New Mexico administers water rights in the basin based on beneficial consumptive use. Forbearance looks like a possible option, but there are problems as well. ***New Mexico will work on a discussion paper regarding the issues associated with water acquisition or forbearance.***

Vegetation in the area has increased significantly since dam closure. The Committee should look at the benefit of removing some of the vegetation to not only help with the stream condition but also to help reduce the phreatic loss. There is a potential loss of 150 cfs between Shiprock and Bluff due to phreatophytes. There is approximately 200 cfs lost between the dam and Shiprock. The actual gain that could be realized if phreatophyte vegetation is removed is really about a third or approximately 50 cfs. This is an option that should be explored. ***Ron Bliesner will work up a discussion paper on phreatophyte losses for the Hydrology Committee's next meeting in January.***

Another possible method is to utilize the water more effectively by doing some inchannel improvements to enhance habitat in critical areas. The Biology Committee has looked at it geomorphically (habitat diversity). This is different but related. This would be looking at habitat modification to allow the same depth of water in critical areas of the river in drought years that you have in wet years and giving up other habitat areas because of the lack of water. Removing all vegetation would take away the stability of the channel and would cause other problems.

Cloud seeding, forbearance, phreatophyte control, and habitat modification are all possible ideas for consideration. ***Shirley Mondy will contact the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Program to see what programs they are using for supplying water for the fish. Finding alternative sources of water will be an agenda item from now until a scope of work is developed.***

Navajo Reservoir Operations - Shortage Sharing Update

There have been three meetings on shortage sharing for 2004. The initial draft looks similar to that used in 2003. Some demands are set based on what the forecast indicates the inflow will be. For 2003, the final updated shortage calculations based on the October 1st forecast, was a zero percent shortage for 2003. Everybody did take some shortages this year, including the fish. The run of the river folks delayed their irrigation season and NIIP will come in at around 10% under normal use. In order to make the shortage sharing understood easier by

non-participating parties, the shortage sharing group should develop a statement that says what conservation occurred and how that impacted the depletions and shortage sharing agreement.

Hydrologic Conditions Discussion

John Simons was not in the office today, so Pat Page didn't have the current information on the hydrologic conditions. ***Pat will send something to the Hydrology Committee regarding the current conditions.***

The reservoir will have very little carry-over storage going into this winter. This means the basin is dependent on the snow pack and snow melt runoff for next season's water. If the runoff is 73% of normal, we won't have shortages. If it is 90% of normal, then a spring peak release could be made.

A biological assessment has been sent to the Service on reducing target base flow in critical habitat to 400 cfs. This was based on the memo developed by the Biology Committee.

4x4 Gate Outlet Repair on Reservoir

The tandem outlet gates are in need of repair and Reclamation has the funding earmarked for this year and would like to get started in the spring. This would preclude the chance for a spring release in 2004, even if the decision tree suggested one should/could be done. The repair work is estimated to take 10 months to complete; however there are several unknowns regarding the work which could push it beyond 10 months. Some members suggested it would be good to wait until the April 1st forecast to set an award date for the repair work because we'd know if a spring release could occur based upon the April 1st forecast. Other members suggested this would be the ideal year to do the repair work and forego a peak release in 2004 to help the reservoir recover and have water available for a 2005 release.

If we don't make the release in 2004, and we don't meet the 8000 cfs peak flow criteria in the critical habitat reach, will that throw us back into consultation because it is tied to the ALP reasonable and prudent alternative? If you take an action that precludes a release when otherwise a release would occur, does that affect Section 7 consultations?

Pat Page will research the gate closure further as far as timing and how long they can wait before repair can begin. Pat will give something to Bill Miller to send to the Biology Committee for their consideration.

Outstanding Data Needs to Complete Modeling Work

There are no outstanding data needs. If New Mexico revises their non-irrigation

depletions or irrigation use data, they will be considered maintenance issues at that time.

Meetings/Conference Calls for FY2004

The following meeting and conference call dates were set by the Committee:

January 20, 2004 - Trigger flows subcommittee meeting in Farmington (3 pm)

January 21, 2004 - meeting in Farmington (9 am – 3 pm)

March 23, 2004 - conference call (9 am – noon)

May 18, 2004 - meeting in Durango (9 am – 3 pm) (*The date of this meeting was changed after the conference call was completed.*)

July 13, 2004 - conference call (9 am – noon)

September 15, 2004 - meeting in Farmington (9 am – 3 pm)

November 16, 2004 - conference call (9 am – noon)

Review New Action Items

The new action items were reviewed and will be added to the Action Item Log.

Next Meeting

The next Hydrology Committee will be January 21, 2004 in Farmington (9 am – 3 pm).